



United States
Department of
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Natural Resources Conservation in South Carolina



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The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in South Carolina continues to conserve our state's natural resources and environment. More than 80 percent of the NRCS budget in South Carolina provides assistance to the general public as well as farmers. Listed below are some recent examples.

South Carolina Partners Program Restores Wetland Wildlife Habitat

The Georgetown NRCS Field Office was part of a pilot project that has taken off in the Winyah Bay Focus Area of Coastal South Carolina. The South Carolina Partners Program Committee designated the Winyah Bay as a priority area for restoration, enhancement and protection of wetland wildlife habitat. The area is recognized as a critical zone for breeding, migrating, and wintering habitats for many species of waterfowl. The SC Partners Program Committee is comprised of the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), NRCS, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR), and Ducks Unlimited (DU). The program allows landowners to receive cost share assistance for restoration or enhancement of managed wetlands and targets old rice plantations where water control structures are dilapidated and in need of replacement.



This new structure (referred to as a rice trunk) allows landowners to control water levels therefore restoring valuable wetland wildlife habitat.

Final Data Released for Constructed Wetlands Demonstration Project

In South Carolina, new technology that provides an alternative to failing conventional septic systems has been tested and analyzed, and the results are promising. The South Carolina Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D)



This constructed wetland in Chapin, South Carolina, looks like a thriving flower bed but is also an effective waste management system.

Councils installed seven constructed wetlands throughout the state in an effort to test their effectiveness in treating wastewater. The systems were placed at homesites with failing septic systems—many of them with untreated sewage surfacing in their yards. The homeowners were pleased with the results and so were the conservationists.

Final data revealed a 99 percent reduction of fecal coliform in the treatment cell before wastewater is released for underground disposal. The demonstration project was part of a RC&D Challenge Grant and was sponsored by SC RC&D Councils in partnership with USDA-NRCS, SC Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR)-Land, Water and Conservation Division, SC Association of Conservation Districts (SCACD), SCDHEC-Division of Onsite Wastewater Management, SCDHEC-Water Quality Monitoring Section, Zabel Environmental, Firestone, and Aqua-Tech Farm of Neeses, SC.

Public Meetings Welcome Comment on Hog Farm Regulations

Two public meetings were scheduled during June as part of the public comment period while SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) staff determines what changes should be made to the state's regulations on large hog farms. The SCDHEC Board imposed a moratorium on issuing permits for large hog farms while SCDHEC staff accepts comments on possible changes from the public. NRCS has several technical representatives serving on the work group that is developing the regulations.

New Technology Created for Development of Waste Management Plans

USDA-NRCS and the University of South Carolina's Earth Sciences and Resources Institute (ESRI-USC) have developed an application tool called Animal Feeding Operation (AFO)Wizard. This application is part of an ongoing project that develops Geographic Information System (GIS)-based natural resource conservation applications.

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The AFO Wizard calculates land application acres and setback areas based on state requirements using field acreage. The AFO Wizard determines the amount of land available for land application based on the type of animal and quantity of waste produced. The application allows for flexibility by using local crop rotations and either nitrogen or phosphorus limitations. The technology will work in any state using each state's buffer or setback requirements. Now, development of waste management plans (which used to take months) can be done much faster with this innovative technology. South Carolina NRCS District Conservationist Teresa Babb recently traveled to Mississippi to demonstrate the system to NRCS employees. During the hands-on training, three waste management plans were developed and feedback received from participants was very positive.

South Carolina Farmers Turn to No-Till to Combat Fuel Prices



William Lawson of Darlington County, SC, believes no-till helps fight rising fuel costs.

William and Jim Lawson of Darlington County, SC, have turned to no-till in an effort to fight rising fuel costs. "No-till allows us to plant with just two tractor trips," said William. NRCS District Conservationist Wayne Cowell has worked with the Lawsons to implement several cost-share programs on their 2,500 acre operation. The Lawsons have combined different machinery to create their own innovative no-till system which works for them. They are enrolled in NRCS' Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) which offers them cost-share and technical assistance. No-till not only saves the Lawsons' time and money—it also helps to reduce erosion, improve water quality, and improve wildlife and food cover. With today's high farming costs and low returns, it is critical that farmers make smart choices in an effort to minimize costs. "If we can implement conservation practices that save us time and money and at the same time conserve resources and protect the environment, then we have made a smart choice," said William.

Dry Hydrants Cut Insurance Rates for Upstate South Carolina Community

Homeowners in the Pumpkintown community of Pickens County will notice lower insurance rates with the installation of twenty dry hydrants. A dry hydrant is a non-pressurized pipe system installed in a pond, lake, or stream to provide a nearby water supply for rural fire departments. The Pumpkintown Fire Department recently learned that the fire district's ISO rating (the rating system for fire departments that effects insurance premiums) dropped from a 9 to a 7. This means hundreds of dollars of savings on yearly insurance premiums for the 1,100 homes and nearly 2,500 residents in the Pumpkintown area. NRCS, Pickens Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and the Foothills Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council secured grants to assist with installation and provided design specifications for the hydrants.



Dry hydrants will save Pumpkintown homeowners hundreds of dollars on annual insurance premiums.